



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Roles and Responsibilities of School Councils

A three-hour training for experienced school-based decision making membership.

Objectives:

- Understand the basic legal functions of a school council
- Understand the roles and responsibilities of each school council member
- Understand how school council committees can be collaborative team
- Understand how school council meetings can be inclusive and effective

Session Overview:

This SBDM training session is meant to help participants understand the roles and responsibilities that each member of the school council has. Participants will understand that each role they have contributes to student achievement in some way. This session assists school council members in understanding how to carry out each role and responsibility in the most effective way.

Student Achievement:

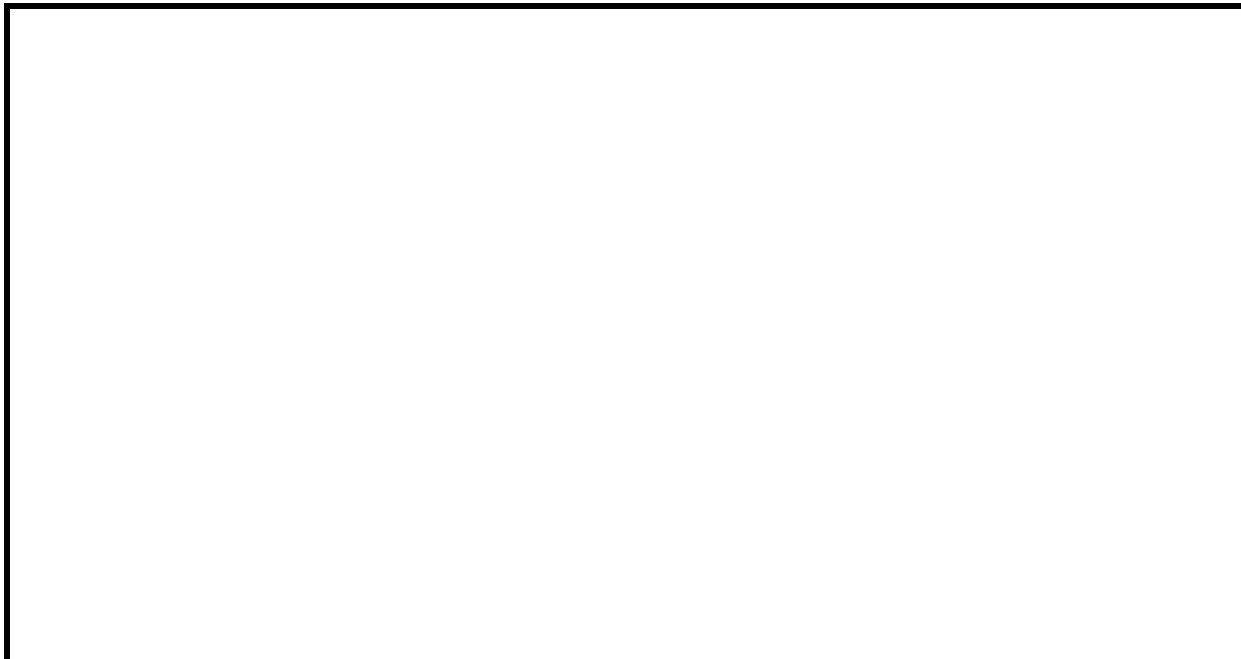
The school council's mission is to improve student achievement [KRS 160.345(2)c]. Each school council must create an environment in their schools that will result in students achieving at high levels. All policies and decisions by the school council must contribute to achievement of the overall school mission.

These SBDM training materials were developed by the Kentucky Department of Education for use in training experienced school council members in implementing school-based decision making.

School councils are part of an overall plan to create schools that teach all Kentucky's children the knowledge and skills that they will need to be successful adults. When we look at the work of school councils, it's good to begin with that end clearly in mind. Look at the SBDM statute as it relates to the school council's role with student achievement:

KRS 160.345(2)(c)1: The school council shall have the responsibility to set school policy consistent with district board policy which shall provide an environment to enhance the students' achievement and help the school meet the goals established by KRS 158.645 and 158.6451. The principal shall be the primary administrator and the instructional leader of the school, and with the assistance of the total school staff shall administer the policies established by the school council and the local board.

What are some factors that contribute to student achievement?

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a student to write their answer to the question about factors contributing to student achievement.

Basic Legal Function of a School Council

If you simply open and read the SBDM statute (KRS 160.345), you will see a variety of school council responsibilities. The chart beginning on the next page organizes these responsibilities into four categories:

- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment;
- Schedules, Staffing, and Safe and Healthy Facilities;
- Improvement Planning and Budgets
- Operating Procedures.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment	
Policy for the determination of curriculum	KRS 160.345(2)(i)1
Policy to determine the assignment of students to classes and programs	KRS 160.345(2)(i)3
Policy to determine the planning and resolution of issues regarding instructional practices	KRS 160.345(2)(i)6
Policy for the selection of extracurricular programs	KRS 160.345(2)(i)8
Policy for the procedures for determining alignment with state standards, technology utilization and program appraisal	KRS 160.345(2)(i)10
Policy for determining the writing process	KRS 158.6453(7)(c)
Policy for implementing advanced placement, international baccalaureate, dual enrollment, dual credit (secondary schools)	KRS 160.348(2)
Policy for implementing parent involvement (Title I, Part A, funded schools)	ESEA (a.k.a. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001)
Schedules, Staffing, and Safe and Healthy Facilities	
Policy for determining the assignment of instructional and non-instructional staff time	KRS 160.345(2)(i)2
Policy for the determination of the schedule of the school day and week	KRS 160.345(2)(i)4
Policy for the determination of use of school space	KRS 160.345(2)(i)5
Policy for the selection and implementation of discipline and classroom management techniques	KRS 160.345(2)(i)7
Policy to outline the process for the adoption of emergency management plan	KRS 160.345(2)(i)9
Policy to determine the procedures for consultation	KRS 160.345(2)(i)11
Policy to establish wellness procedures (elementary)	KRS 160.345(11)
Policy to establish wellness and nutrition procedures (for schools receiving federal funds for free/reduced lunch)	Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2012
Configuration of flexible grouping	KRS 158.031
Principal selection	KRS 160.345(2)(h)
Improvement Planning and Budgets	

Annual review of data as shown on state and local student assessments and program assessments	KRS 160.345(2)(j)
Number of persons per job classification	KRS 160.345(2)(f)
Determining textbooks, instructional materials and student support services	KRS 160.345(2)(g)
School budget administration (aligned with district procedures)	KRS 160.345(3)(a)
Assessment of individual student progress (aligned with district procedures)	KRS 160.345(3)(b)
School improvement planning process (aligned with district procedures)	KRS 160.345(3)(c)
Professional development plans (aligned with district procedures)	KRS 160.345(3)(d) KRS 160.345(8) KRS 158.060(4)
Operating Procedures	
Committees	KRS 160.345(2)(c)2
Meetings and meeting schedule	KRS 160.345(2)(d) KRS 160.345(2)(e) KRS 61.810

Notice many of the responsibilities begin with *Policy*. This means that the school council must have a written and adopted process or procedure in this area. Your current school council policy manual should already have these documents.

Some of the other areas only require a discussion and a decision. You do not necessarily need a policy; however, a common used practice or a written procedure ensures that the task is completed.

Limitations

We have looked specifically at the major responsibilities of a school council. However, school councils also have limitations. The chart on the next page lists these.

Limitation	Reasoning
Run the school on a day-to-day basis	
Break contracts	
Break state or federal statutes and regulations	
Spend funds that the school does not have	
Make decisions outside their areas of authority	

Now, let's look at a couple of policies. With each policy, determine first, does this policy fall within the school council's authority? If it does not, what would a school council need to do in order to implement the policy? What are the concerns you have for this policy?

<p style="text-align: center;">Attendance Policy Kentucky High School</p> <p>Attendance will be calculated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full day absence will be recorded for any student who misses 75 percent or more of their courses in one day. • A half-day absence will be recorded for any student who misses between 25 percent and 75 percent of their courses in one day. • A tardy will be recorded for any student who misses less than 25 percent of their courses in one day. • Perfect attendance will be recorded for any student with zero absences and zero times tardy. <p>An excused absence is recorded if, and only if,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A parents comes to the school to excuse an absence or sends a note that will be verified by the attendance clerk. If sent by note, the note must arrive within three school days to be considered excused. • An official doctor's excuse is filed the day the student returns to school. • An email is sent to the attendance clerk at attendance.clerk@district.kyschools.us. <p>Parents are encouraged to keep track of their child's attendance through the Parent Portal.</p>
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<p>Does the attendance policy fall within the school council's authority? If not, what would a school council need to do in order to implement the policy?</p>	<p>What are some concerns of this policy?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Program Review Policy Kentucky Elementary School</p> <p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school council annually will select members for the Program Review committee. The committee will consist of four teachers (one from primary, one from intermediate, one from special education and one from enrichment), the principal and two parents. • The Program Review committee will review data periodically throughout the year, deciding on the necessary steps for completion. Pertinent goals will be included in the school improvement plan. • The Program Review committee will recommend to the school council the needed professional learning for the school. • The Program Review committee chairperson is responsible for inputting the data into ASSIST by the due date. <p>The principal will monitor the committee to ensure completion of the Program Reviews by the due date.</p>	
<p>Does the Program Review policy fall within the school council's authority? If not, what would a school council need to do in order to implement the policy?</p>	<p>What are some concerns of this policy?</p>

The Roles and Responsibilities of Each School Council Member

Every member on the council has a specific role. In this section, we will look at what those roles are. When working together at a school council meeting, all school council members are equal.

Principal:

As stated in the SBDM statute [KRS 160.345(2)(b)1], the principal is the chair of the school council. As chairperson, the principal's role is that of facilitator, gatekeeper and organizer. The principal should strive for efficiency and productivity from all school council members. He or she should focus on the objectives and the collective energy of the group moving towards solutions in an orderly fashion. As chairperson, the principal is charged with working with the school council and its committees to help the school exceed its threshold level of student performance.

The principal, as chairperson, should be facilitating the school council meetings. School council discussions and decisions should focus on student achievement. If the topic at a meeting does not affect student achievement, then the topic does not belong at a school council meeting.

The principal, as chairperson, should be establishing ground rules or norms that can be a tool for keeping order and focus in a school council meeting. Effective ground rules that all school council members agree to live by will help the school council avoid conflict and personalizing issues that need to be discussed openly.

Teacher Representatives:

Teacher representatives make up the majority of the school council. Teacher representatives, in order to assist the effectiveness of the school council, should:

- Increase understanding of school management to ensure they're meeting the changing educational needs of students
- Be familiar with the statutes that govern school-based decision making
- Serve on a variety of school council committees
- Maintain a good and working relationship with staff, families, and administrators
- Be decisive on issues that are in the best interest of all students
- Devote time necessary to understand how the present school council is managing the school, especially in areas of curriculum, instruction, scheduling or staff time, student placement, space allotment, budget and personnel
- Be "team players" and value the opinions and perspectives of other faculty and families
- Understand the link between school councils and successful school management

Parent Representatives:

SBDM is an opportunity for families to work in harmony with teachers and school administrators toward establishing goals for student success. Parent representatives serving on the school council should:

- Be aware of all assessments administered to students and the school's results
- Understand how the school functions
- Accept that the school cannot change overnight
- Understand the school council structure, including the structure and functions of the school council committees
- Be willing to make the time commitment necessary to be an effective member of a school council
- Promote communication and exchange of information
- Understand that the school council has not replaced the role of the school principal

Reflection

Think about your role with the school council. What is one unique thing that you bring to the school council meetings? What do you expect from the other two role groups so that you can be a successful and efficient school council member?

How School Council Committees Can Be a Collaborative Team

School council committees can share the decision-making workload of the school council. They can research and find effective strategies and adapt them to their school's needs. They can study best practices, talk to experts, visit successful schools or take other steps to develop ideas that can increase student proficiency.

Committees are also a link to the whole school community. The participation of other teachers and staff members as well as parents and community members is essential to the school council's success.

Committees are not required for each school and school council. However, committees are best practice and will encourage shared decision making among all school stakeholders.

If committees are established, the school council must have a committee policy that details the number of committees, the level of authority for each of the committees and describes the process for membership selection. The school council should provide written guidance for the committees and require updates from the committees at regular school council meetings.

Committees come in two types of structures:

1. Standing Committee – These committees continue their work throughout the year and should be specifically included in the committee policy.
2. Ad Hoc Committee – These committees are formed for a specific purpose and then are disbanded when the charge has been completed.

Below are some examples of committees and a brief description. Is the committee a standing committee or an ad hoc committee?

Extracurricular – discusses and evaluates extracurricular activities	Standing or Ad Hoc?
Discipline – discusses and evaluates the discipline data and policy	Standing or Ad Hoc?
Professional development – plans and coordinates professional learning opportunities with the improvement planning process	Standing or Ad Hoc?
Improvement planning – discusses the school's needs assessment and develops improvement strategies and activities	Standing or Ad Hoc?
Curriculum and instruction – discusses and evaluates the school's curriculum and instructional strategies	Standing or Ad Hoc?
Interviewing teacher candidate – completes the interviewing process as part of the school council's consultation policy	Standing or Ad Hoc?

On the next page is a sample committee policy. Read through the policy and determine its strengths and your concerns.

Committees

Commonwealth High School shall have five standing committees:

- Budget Committee
- Curriculum and Instruction Committee
- Climate and Culture Committee
- Improvement Planning Committee
- Teacher and Student Programs and Activities Committee

Each standing committee shall have at least eight members, including at least one parent.

The principal shall invite all parents by placing a notice in the school's monthly newsletter and sending a One-Call message. The message shall be sent in English and Spanish.

The principal shall place committee sign-up sheets on the SBDM bulletin board and in the staff workroom. Parents and community members may also sign up by telephone or email.

The school council will appoint committee members, ensuring reasonable representation of minority groups.

All school council committees established under this policy are public agencies and are subject to Kentucky's open meetings/open records statutes.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Does the policy set the number of committees?2. Does the policy set clear responsibilities?3. Does the policy encourage participation?4. What are the strengths in the policy? What are your concerns? | |
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Reflection

What are some of your standing school council committees? What are the committees' responsibilities? How can you ensure that you have effective committees?

How School Council Meetings Can Be Inclusive and Effective

Understanding and having effective meeting skills is crucial. What happens at the school council meetings will have a direct effect on the functioning of the school.

Let's begin with a pre-test to see what you know about Kentucky's Open Meetings statutes. For each item, mark **True** or **False**.

- _____ 1. School council and committee meetings are by invitation only.
- _____ 2. Principals can call special school council meetings whenever they need as long as all members are notified by phone or email.
- _____ 3. Special council meetings can only be called by the principal.
- _____ 4. School councils can go into closed sessions for any reasons.
- _____ 5. Open meetings rules apply when the school council makes decisions, but not if they only discuss the issues.

School councils are required to conduct regular scheduled meetings. Minutes of these meetings must be kept following the open meetings/open records statutes. All meetings where a quorum of the membership is present, where public business is being discussed or at which time actions or decisions are made are open meetings to the public.

All school councils must adhere to all open-meeting requirements, which state:

- Each agency sets its own regular meeting schedule.
- The schedule must list the dates, times, and places of the regular meetings.
- The schedule must be available to the public.

Closed Session:

A closed session is allowed to discuss actual or potential litigation, to discuss candidates during consultation or principal selection or to discuss items where state or federal law specifically requires privacy, such as school emergency plans. All other business must be held in open session.

In a closed session, these procedures must be followed:

1. The school council must start in open session and then give notice and rationale for entering closed session. A motion must be made and approved to enter into closed session. The general topic that is going to be discussed must be described as well as which subsection of the law allows a closed session for that issue.
2. No action can be taken. The topic may be discussed thoroughly, but no decision can be made in closed session.
3. No subject may be discussed other than the ones publicly announced.

4. Minutes should not be taken.
5. The school council must reconvene to open session to make a decision.

Special Meetings:

It is occasionally necessary to call special meetings. The chairperson or a majority of the school council can call a special meeting that is not on the schedule. Written notice must be provided that state the date, time, place and agenda for the special meeting. The written notice must be sent to all school council members 24 hours in advance, as well as posted at the school.

Developing Agendas and Keeping the Minutes

Your agenda sets out the tasks for each meeting. It show the topics in order so that members and other participants can understand the purpose and goals for the meeting.

Each council and committee determines the frequency and agenda for its meetings. That's required by KRS 160.345(2)(e). A preliminary agenda can be sent out before the meeting, so long as the school council approves it when the meeting begins. During regular meetings, the council can also revise the agenda.

Agendas for special called meetings cannot be amended once the official notice has been delivered.

When preparing an agenda for a meeting, whether it be a regular scheduled meeting or a special called meeting, below are some questions to keep in mind:

- Purpose
 - Why are we having this meeting?
 - What do we need to achieve?
 - What topics from the last meeting need to be addressed again?
 - What new topics need to be addressed?
- Notifications
 - Date
 - Location
 - Starting and ending time
 - Media outlet notifications
- Agenda
 - What items need to be addressed at every meeting (reviews and approves previous meeting minutes, committee reports, budget items, new business)?
 - What new items should be addressed at this meeting (improvement planning, data analysis, job classifications)?
 - When will the agenda and supporting documents need to be provided to the council members?

Review the sample regular scheduled meeting agenda on the next page. What are the strengths of this agenda? What other topics may need to be included in order to have an effective meeting?

<p style="text-align: center;">Commonwealth Elementary School School Council Meeting October 20, 201X</p> <p>Opening Business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Roll Callb) Approval of Agendac) Approval of Minutes from Last Meetingd) Good News Reportse) Public Comment <p>Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Monthly Review of School Improvement Planb) Report on Revisions of Plan for Next Yearc) 2015-2016 Budget Report <p>Committee Reports</p> <p>New Business</p> <p>Adjournment</p>	<p>What are the strengths of this agenda? What other topics may need to be included in order to have an effective meeting?</p>
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Keeping accurate minutes is another responsibility of the school council. The minutes are the official record of the school council decisions. For practical purposes, if the school council minutes do not reflect a decision, then the decision did not occur.

At minimum, the school council minutes must include:

- Council name
- Names of members present
- Date of meeting

- Any decision made

Other items to include in the minutes are:

- Time the meeting began and ended
- Names of others present
- Summary of major points made in reports and discussions
- Names of people who presented reports
- Attachments of documents relevant to the group discussions
- Follow-up summary: who agreed to do what and by when

Minutes are not meant to be a:

- Point-by-point account of discussions specifying who said what in a discussion
- Report on off-track discussion including optional items that could embarrass someone
- An opinion of the author of the minutes or any school council member.

Reflection

What did I learn about my specific role in the school council?

What steps could I take today to be a more effective school council member that fulfills my responsibilities?

